

Message Text

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CORRECTED COPY (TEXT CORRECTED PARA 1.)

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BL, PGOV

SUBJECT: PEREDA ON BOLIVIA'S ELECTORAL PROBLEM

1. I MET PRIVATELY WITH A CONTRITE JUAN PEREDA ON THE EVENING OF JULY 18. I TOLD HIM I WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS AND INVITED HIS VIEWS AS TO THE CURRENT SITUATION AND POSSIBLE OUTCOMES. PEREDA HIMSELF IMMEDIATELY RAISED THE ISSUE OF ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES AND SAID HE AND HIS SUPPORTERS "HAD COMMITTED MISTAKES AND WERE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE THIS". HE WOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT'S CLEARING UP THE RESULTS BY ANNULLING TAINTED VOTES. PEREDA SAID HE WAS RESENTFUL OF THE BIASED ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS WHO HAD DENOUNCED ONLY IRREGULARITIES IN FAVOR OF PEREDA WHEN VOTE BUYING, BALLOT-BOX STUFFING AND INTIMIDATION BY SILES SUPPORTERS, PARTICULARLY IN LA PAZ, POTOSI AND CHUQUISACA, HAD BEEN LEGION. A CONSCIENTIOUS CLEAN-UP OF THE VOTING RESULTS, ACCORDING TO PEREDA, WOULD AFFECT UDP VOTES AS WELL AS UNP VOTES.

2. PEREDA SAID HE THOUGHT "THREATS" FROM THE U.S. WERE CONTRIBUTING TO A HARDENING OF POSITIONS, BOTH IN THE MILITARY AND AMONG THE OPPOSITION. I ASKED WHETHER "THREATS" WAS AN ALLUSION TO MY CONVERSATION WITH ADRIAZOLA AND WHETHER HE HAD

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INFORMED PEREDA OF THAT CONVERSATION. PEREDA SAID YEST ON BOTH POINTS. I TOLD PEREDA THAT MESSAGE WAS A CONFIDENTIAL ONE FOR BANZER, BUT IT WOULD PERHAPS UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES BE BETTER IF I EXPLAINED TO PEREDA DIRECTLY WHAT THE U.S. POSITION WAS. I SAID THAT THE U.S. AND THE HEMISPHERE HAD AN INTEREST IN THE FAIRNESS OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES; THIS INTEREST MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO CONDONE ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES. AN ELECTORAL RESULT

IN BOLIVIA SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY FRAUD WOULD, THEREFORE, INFLUENCE NEGATIVELY THE GAMUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIPS. TO MINIMIZE MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN TWO FRIENDLY COUNTRIES IT SEEMED TO US THE OPEN AND RIGHT THING TO SAY THIS TO THE GOB NOW, WHEN THE ISSUE OF IRREGULARITIES WAS BEING CONFRONTED, NOT LATER. IN ANY EVENT, SAID PEREDA, "INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE" WAS NOW A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE TANGLE THAT HAD TO BE RESOLVED.

3. PEREDA SAID THAT WHEN ALL THE ALLEGATIONS OF IRREGULARITIES WERE SORTED OUT NO ONE COULD CONTEST THAT MORE THAN 45 PERCENT OF BOLIVIAN VOTERS HAD EXPRESSED THEIR SUPPORT FOR HIM, AND THAT ONLY 20-ODD PERCENT HAD VOTED FOR HERNAN SILES. NEVERTHELESS, WHETHER OR NOT THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT AUTHENTICATED AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY FOR PEREDA, HE WAS PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE THAT HIS UNP PROBABLY DID NOT HAVE A MANDATE TO GOVERN ALONE. HE WANTED A "UNITY" GOVERNMENT AND WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO NEGOTIATE A COALITION WITH AT LEAST THE FORCES OF VICTOR PAZ AND RENE BERNAL. PEREDA SAID HE HAD ALREADY TALKED TO PAZ AND SENT SUCH A MESSAGE TO BERNAL. HE SAID PAZ WAS CONSIDERING THE IDEA BUT INSISTED ON CHANGE OF THE VOTE IN TQUIJA DEPARTMENT WHICH PAZ FEELS HE SHOULD HAVE WON. PEREDA SAID HE WAS OPEN TO CREATING A SUPER-MINISTRY FOR PAZ, TO CREATING A TWO- OR THREE-PARTY COUNCIL OF STATE OR TO ANY OTHER REASONABLE ASPECT OF COALITION NEGOTIATIONS.

4. PEREDA SAID THAT HE WANTED ME TO KNOW IN STRICT CONFIDENCE
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THAT HIS OBJECTIVE WAS HEALING AND UNITY--TO THE EXTENT THAT IF HIS PERSONALITY SHOULD PROVE TO BE A BARRIER TO A UNITY GOVERNMENT OF THE THREE "CENTER" PARTIES, HE WAS PREPARED TO STEP DOWN AND LET SOMEONE ELSE BE PRESIDENT. HE REPEATED THE SAME POINT LATER FOR EMPHASIS.

5. I TOLD PEREDA THAT THE USG HAD A STRONG AND CLEAR POSITION ON THE QUESTION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD WHICH IN THE BOLIVIAN CASE CAME DOWN TO A BELIEF THAT THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT AT THIS POINT HAD TO ANNUL FRAUDULENT VOTES AND THAT GOB AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD SUPPORT THE COURT'S FULFILLING THIS CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE. THE USG APPROPRIATELY DID NOT HAVE A POSITION ON COALITIONS, WHICH WAS AN INTERNAL BOLIVIAN MATTER. AS A FRIEND OF BOLIVIA, I PERSONALLY DID FEEL THAT THE QUESTION OF ELECTORAL FRAUD WAS NOW INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO COALITION PROSPECTS AND TO THE VIABILITY OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT. I FELT THAT UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT ADDRESSED HEAD ON THE PROBLEM OF CLEANING UP ELECTORAL FRAUD, THE NEXT GOVERNMENT WAS GOING TO FACE A UNITED, RAVANCHIST OPPOSITION WHICH WOULD NOT FEEL OBLIGATED TO RESPECT THE RULES OF THE GAME. THAT WOULD NOT BE AN AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING FOR ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN BOLIVIA AND COULD LEAD TO A DANGEROUS POLARIZATION OF BOLIVIAN POLITICS.

PEREDA SAID HE HAS AWARE OF THIS ANALYSIS, SHARED IT, AND WOULD DO ALL HE COULD TO AVOID THIS SITUATION.

6. I TOLD PEREDA I WAS DISTURBED BY THE HARD LINE SOME OF THE GENERALS WERE EXPRESSING AND ASKED HIM IF HE THOUGHT BANZER PERSONALLY WOULD GO ALONG WITH A COALITION GOVERNMENT. PEREDA SAID BANZER WOULD GO ALONG--THEN CHECKED HIMSELF AND SAID "AT LEAST BANZER HAS TOLD ME HE WOULD SUPPORT THIS RESULT." PEREDA ASKED ME WHETHER I COULD HELP IN GETTING AT LEAST PAZ AND BERNAL TO NEGOTIATE ON COALITION POSSIBILITIES. I TOLD PEREDA I THOUGHT I COULD IN GOOD CONSCIENCE URGE THE OTHER PARTIES TO MAINTAIN MODERATION AND FLEXIBILITY AND TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT THAT LEGITIMATELY REPRESENTED A MAJORITY OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE.
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IN OTHER WORDS, I WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO BE HELPFUL, IF NOT PRECISELY THE WAY HE HAD IN MIND. I ENDED ON THE NOTE THAT I THOUGHT THE KEY WAS A SINCERE EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTIES TO FACE THE PROBLEM OF ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES CAPC LAW.
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